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rankest in still another woods. *Cypripedium acaule* and wintergreen take us southwest and rhododendrons twenty miles southeast. The upland meadows for Bobolinks and Meadowlarks, the cliffs for hawk and eagle, the woods to the south for Oven-bird and Chewink, the lake to the north for duck and Bank Swallow. But for the greatest variety and abundance, all the year round, just around the corner lies the Best Place of all.

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## THE MOTACILLIDÆ OF GERMANY.

W. F. HENNINGER.

This family, represented in the A. O. U. Check-List by the genera *Motacilla*, *Budytes*, and *Anthus*, is almost entirely palæartic, stragglers only of these genera visiting us in North America. Setting aside the accidental visitors of this family in Germany, I had the good fortune to become acquainted with the two species of *Motacilla*, the one of *Budytes* and three of the four of *Anthus* during my eight years' stay in Europe. It may be of some interest to the readers of the BULLETIN to hear more of these birds than the short notes of our manuals and check-lists are able to give, and so I describe them as I saw them in their favorite haunts.

The White and Yellow Wagtails are both described in our North American Manuals. The third species, the "Mountain Wagtail" (*Motacilla sulphurea*), has the upper parts ash-gray, tinged with olive on head and crissum; general appearance of wings brownish, lores blackish-gray, throat deep black, lower parts lemon-yellow.

One of the first birds that greeted me, when I reached the broad pasture-lands of Holland in 1885, after crossing the Atlantic, was the merry wagtail. As the big steamer

plowed its way slowly through the canal from Ymuiden to Amsterdam, the eye was favored with the characteristic Dutch landscape, windmills, dams, canals, fat pastures, beautiful cows, and of birds the stork, the lapwing, and the wagtails. The long grass harbored the Yellow Wagtail, but along the roadsides, at the brooks, flowing along with the same slow surety with which everything in Holland moves, at occasional ponds, at the windmills, the White Wagtail was in abundance, showing that it well deserves its German name "Bachstelze." It is a bird that is ever alert, ever in motion, graceful in its movements, pleasing to the eye in its Prussian colors, a favorite with everybody. Early in March it returns to Germany, running along on the top of the tile roofs, wagging its tail continually. We greet them cordially as one of the first harbingers of spring. Yet ugly snowstorms often come in this month and ice covers the brooks and sloughs. Safely sheltered sleeps the little Wagtail under the tiles of the roof, or in the knot-holes of a beam. Before daylight it is out to seek food, circling about its favorite places, diving down into the snow in its futile efforts and seeing that it must seek refuge at gutters, barns, and dung heaps. Bye and bye the ice floats down the rivers, the sun shines brighter—spring has come. The insects leave their gloomy places and begin to play in the warm rays of the spring sun. Troops of wagtails visit these insect meetings to catch them, constantly teasing, chasing, quarreling with one another; nodding the head, wagging the tail, singing at all times, ever restless, now robbing a brother of a fat spider with lightning quickness, now spying a slowly flying crow or hawk with a loud alarm call, and in an instant the whole troop surrounds the detested enemy, scolding, tormenting, pecking at him, till he hurries to the woods. Whirr! They return to their meal. Now they follow the ploughing peasant, gathering worms from the furrows, hurrying hither and thither; away again they fly to the pasture near by, where the sheep are cropping the first grass, to pick up the excrements or even to alight on the backs of the animals to

snatch up their insect prey. What a delight to watch the wagtails, especially during the mating time. Ever pugnacious, they are now ready to fight upon the least provocation, garrulous, envious, jealous all the time. Full of malice, the males battle for the possession of a fair lady, some clashing together in the air, some running against one another as the ancient knights in the tournaments, some crowding one another at the edge of the roof in fierce angry combat, till the weaker one has to "give up" and is chased clear out of sight and reach, and then they enter upon their household duties. "Any old place" is good enough for the nest; in a tree, upon the beams of a house or barn, in a stonepile, in a brick wall the carelessly constructed nest is placed always revealing the fact that these birds originally bred in holes. The most beautiful nest I ever saw of this species was placed on the top beam of our enormous "Turner hall" at Niesky, Silesia, 65 feet above the ground. On June 1st, 1890 I climbed up to it. Outwardly a mass of rootlets, grass-blades, straws, moss, and paper it was rather a cozy domicile on the inside, soft to the touch of the hand, composed of and walled with wool, hair, lichens and other similar material. Six eggs were in it, grayish, speckled with lilac and gray, and as I gaze upon them at present, they bring back to my memory that beautiful nest, the anxious parents and the dangerous climb in the dusk of that June day.

Both of the season's broods wander along the streams and ramble about the swampy ditches, playfully devouring thousands of worms, snapping at insects in a short, jerky flight, or gathering them from the earth, running rapidly to and fro, constantly calling to one another, till evening comes and all meet with starlings and swallows, to roost in the willows fringing the swamps and ponds till the chilling frosts of October cover the ground. One morning we awaken to find that all have left us for the south.

Away from the abode of man to the mountains we must wander to find the other member of the true wagtails. Where the ice cold waters of the brook tumble from rock to

rock over the white pebbles in the shadow of the majestic pines that murmur a low accompaniment to the gushing, spraying cataract, or where the clapping of the mill-wheel breaks the solitude at the entrance into the valley we meet the Mountain Wagtail, dancing cheerily from stone to stone, catching water insects, always trying not to soil its bright garment. As it trips along the foaming eddy its gay song reaches our ear. Though not a beautiful song, still it far surpasses that of its relatives. Now it warns its young, that have been reared in a nest similar to our Phoebe's in construction and location, and are following their parents in the first youthful ventures. Only in pairs or small broods do we meet them till they troop together in the fall, and but few brave the winters of the north. The same crafty and jealous spirit as that of the White Wagtail leads it to strife and quarrel, and as the White Wagtail is inseparable from the neighborhood of man, so is the Mountain Wagtail ever associated with the dashing, gleeful, glittering silver wavelets of the mountain streams, the pet of young and old, admired and loved by all who observe it, and yet a true Wagtail in every respect. Never persecuted in a country where laws are not only given, but also enforced, where the small boy is kept under the strict guidance and custody of teachers and parents, where the "egg hog" is a myth, it will always live and thrive to adorn as a jolly, rollicking, roving elf the wild streams of the German mountains. A bird beautiful to behold, useful in its work and ever cherished in my memory as one of nature's favorites, as I met it in the Hartz or the Sudetic mountains.

From the rugged mountains we descend into the broad, fertile plain and instantly the scenery changes. Fields carefully tilled surround us, cottages with little flax-haired children playing about them decorate the landscape, and green pastures stretch out before us, with cows lazily resting or grazing in them. Rural serenity greets us as we walk over the pastures. Numerous Yellow Wagtails attract us by their pretty garb; even though they may nest quite a distance away, they seek such places for their food. Smaller and less

hardy than its cousins it is not till in the latter part of April that it comes to Germany from the hot tropics. Where the ground is low and swampy, where the cattle love to dwell, not an acre of ground can be found that does not harbor at least one or two pairs of Yellow Wagtails. More like the White Wagtail in its ways, it is a poorer songster, equally agile in running and quicker in flight. With vibrating wings it often hovers over a certain place, finally drops down into the drooping grass, runs about in it with an astounding dexterity, never loosing an opportunity to gulp an unfortunate gnat or spider. Gregarious at all times, it is also extremely quarrelsome and a perfect rowdy. It raises but one brood in a season. The nest, like that of all birds that build on the ground, is difficult to find, perfectly characteristic and contains four to six eggs, greatly varying in color. Both eggs and young are carefully watched by the anxious parents. The young quickly learn how to hide in the dense grass and are soon as gay and restless as their parents, till on some frosty September morning, when the first autumn winds moan over the stubble fields and turnip patches, the whole army wings its way swiftly to the sunshine and verdure of Africa.

Of the four species of Pipits, the "Water Pipit" (*Anthus aquaticus*), the one similar to our American Pipit, is rare in Germany, and though nesting in the mountains of Silesia, where I stayed mostly, is the only one I never met with. The Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*) and the Tree Pipit (*Anthus arboreus*) are very much alike in coloration, both olive brown above spotted with darker markings, beneath light ochraceous with blackish brown spots. But the hind claw of the Tree Pipit is short, crescent shaped, while the Meadow Pipit has a long but little curved claw. The Fallow Pipit (*Anthus campestris*) has a far more brownish-gray appearance and is easily recognized at a distance. In size all three are very much alike, but differ in habits. How distinctly I recollect the day when I saw the Meadow Pipit the first time. The Curate of the Museum at Niesky and I had reach-

ed on our stroll a swampy place called "The Unfathomable Pond." Green, dense moss covered the biggest part of it; snipes, red shanks and lapwings enlivened it and finally I succeeded in crossing the mossy carpet, where the foot became entangled and disappeared slowly in the treacherous, greenish, gurgling waters, where myriads of gnats and foul odors came up as the bad angels of the deep to the intruders of their territory. A few little hillocks where several birches grew in the midst of the swamp gave my weary feet a rest. Lapwings were furious, snipes were "bleating" incessantly, anxious in the extreme, yet well knowing that no mortal foot could ever reach their haunts. All of a sudden, from a little mossy knoll I saw a small bird rising with wide-spread wings, puffed up feathers and jubilant notes, ascending in flight as well as in song and then after reaching a certain height slowly descending, the song pining away. Long did we observe a number of the Meadow Pipits enjoying their sweet notes in that dreadful swamp. I jotted the song down in my notebook but "dsick, dsick, dsick, dsick, wītga, wītga, wēēa, wīta, wīta, wīta, wīta, wīta, yick, yick, yick, yick, yick, wēēa, wīta, wīta, wītga, tīrrrrrr," is not very expressive of what we heard. Many other pipits we met in the adjacent fields, after we finally worked our way out of the dismal swamp, but only heard the call notes "īst, wīst." At such places the nest is found, built by the female only, the latter selecting a knoll in the swamp, in the heath, or a potato patch, cheered by the song of its mate. The first brood is raised in April, the second in June and sometimes a third one later on. The nest is a loose structure; the eggs vary less than those of the Tree Pipit, of which it may be said that they may have any imaginable combination of color and markings. After the eggs are incubated for about two weeks, the young are hatched and tenderly cared for by the parents. Then they roam about the country, feeding on water insects, gnats, grasshoppers, and spiders, being a frequent companion of the Yellow Wagtail in seeking food and in quarreling. On October 3, 1889, on newly ploughed

fields changed into one great mire by a recent cloudburst, I saw swarm after swarm alighting, running swiftly over the mud and in a few minutes it was impossible to tell where they were, till a shot was fired, when thousands rose into the air. Generally during wet and cloudy weather they hide in the heath, in the vicinity of ponds and, frightened, circle around you in short, graceful curves, till they suddenly drop down to their old hiding place. Rarely do they alight on trees, their long hind claw hindering their standing securely.

Contrary to this the Tree Pipit is the bird of the forests. Scarcely to be distinguished from the Meadow Pipit in general appearance, he clings to the trees. As the former he migrates in great numbers and during the first few days after his arrival in April we only hear his call notes "yick, yick." But soon we can hear them everywhere in the woods long before we stand under the murmuring pines. From a tall, majestic tree in the midst of a clearing, he rises straight up into the air, now descending with half opened wings to a smaller tree, again to rise and float towards heaven, now getting his reward from his joyful spouse. Again resuming his mating song, he runs across a rival. The battle is inevitable. With ruffled plumage and angry shrieks they scuffle on a long slender bough, till the "new-comer" is beaten and our champion once more occupies his favorite pine. His song is superior to that of the Meadow Pipit; more powerful, more rounded and melodious it greets us ever in spring time from the woods. He is always hopping and singing about, has no time for nest building and but little for feeding—a useful songster and a jovial messenger of the forest. His nest is placed anywhere and similar to that of the Meadow Pipit. He is equally anxious about his young and in fall often unites with other Pipits, and when nature begins to die off, with the last rustling leaves of the golden tinted fall he leaves us too.

Humbler in dress than both of his relatives, the Fallow Pipit is the bird of the potato fields, sterile wastes, stony hillsides and barren fallows. The Fallow Pipit is a very shy, retiring and restless bird, jerking his tail up and down, but

slower than the Wagtails. Where they have chosen their home, they select a certain stone, bush or post, where the male has his observation point and when danger approaches either flies rapidly and easily away, or drops like a rocket into the grass. Curiously enough they really have no true song, but only a few monotonous notes, yet the Fallow Pipit is an attractive bird. Especially in the region in which he lives he gives a charm to many a desolate waste or rough rocky hill, where no other creatures seem to thrive. Of all the Pipits he is the best nest builder, and while his nest is bulky it is yet the most difficult to find as each pair has a rather large territory. I never was lucky enough to find the nest, but have heard and read that it is well made and finely lined, containing five eggs, which are white, densely covered with reddish minute spots, varying considerable in size but little in color. He is one of the first birds to leave Germany; in August he starts for the south, traveling by day and by night in small companies, quietly, scarcely noticed by any one, just as his whole life is little known to any one but the forester or ornithologist, who seeks him in his barren home.

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## THE YELLOW-THROATED VIREO.

(*Vireo flavifrons*.)

BY J. WARREN JACOBS, WAYNESBURG, PA.

One of the most interesting little birds with which I have become acquainted is the Yellow-throated Vireo. Much of my enthusiasm is due, perhaps, to the fact that they so successfully spirited away their little moss-like hanging-basket, that my efforts to reveal it were futile, for a number of years, until after the young had flown. Repeated search, however, was rewarded by the finding of a nestful of fledglings, which blinked at me from the brim of the nest, and showed every